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of Transportation

**Urban Mass
Transportation
Administration**

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The Point-to-Point Club: An Elderly and Handicapped Service Based in Ardmore, Pennsylvania

**Final Report
March 1983**

**UMTA/TSC Project Evaluation Series
Service and Management Demonstration Program**

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16. Abstract The Point-to-Point Club, a division of a non-profit human services agency (Resources for Human Development), provides door-through-door escort service to elderly and handicapped individuals within a four-county area in the Philadelphia region. Using part-time driver/escorts (who use their own autos) the Club serves members for a fare of \$8 per hour (plus \$0.20 per mile for deadheading time). The 280 members each pay a \$10 annual membership fee. Approximately 30% of the membership uses the service regularly, although (until June 1982) 6 members accounted for nearly half of the roughly 400 rides per month. At a monthly cost of approximately \$4,000, the club's service has been operating at a cost of about \$10 per trip. The costs not recovered through fares are covered by a combination of membership fees and private donations. The Club has been in operation since October 1980.		
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PREFACE

This study of the Point-to-Point Club was funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) under the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) Service and Management Demonstration Program. The study was performed by Multisystems, under contract to the U.S. DOT's Transportation Systems Center (TSC).

This report is based on data obtained from the Point-to-Point Club and its parent organization, Resources for Human Development (RHD). The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their assistance: Claudia Shroyer, Director of Point-to-Point Club; Robert Fishman, Executive Director of RHD; Fredy-Jo Grafman of RHD; Bruce Spear, Evaluation Monitor, TSC; Larry Bruno, Project Manager, UMTA; and Carol Everett of the Urban Institute (design contractor to UMTA). Finally, the author would like to thank Audrey Schneider and Cherine Tulloch of Multisystems, who typed the report.

METRIC CONVERSION FACTORS

Approximate Conversions to Metric Measures

Symbol	When You Know	Multiply by	To Find	Symbol
LENGTH				
in	inches	2.5	centimeters	cm
ft	feet	30	centimeters	cm
yd	yards	0.9	meters	m
mi	miles	1.6	kilometers	km

AREA

in ²	square inches	6.5	square centimeters	cm ²
ft ²	square feet	0.09	square meters	m ²
yd ²	square yards	0.8	square meters	m ²
mi ²	square miles	2.6	square kilometers	km ²
	acres	0.4	hectares	ha

MASS (weight)

oz	ounces	28	grams	g
lb	pounds	0.45	kilograms	kg
	short tons	0.9	tonnes	t
	(2000 lb)			

VOLUME

tsp	teaspoons	5	milliliters	ml
Tbsp	tablespoons	15	milliliters	ml
fl oz	fluid ounces	30	milliliters	ml
c	cups	0.24	liters	l
pt	pints	0.47	liters	l
qt	quarts	0.95	liters	l
gal	gallons	3.8	liters	l
ft ³	cubic feet	0.03	cubic meters	m ³
yd ³	cubic yards	0.76	cubic meters	m ³

TEMPERATURE (exact)

°F	Fahrenheit temperature	5/9 (after subtracting 32)	Celsius temperature	°C
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Approximate Conversions from Metric Measures

Symbol	When You Know	Multiply by	To Find	Symbol
LENGTH				
mm	millimeters	0.04	inches	in
cm	centimeters	0.4	inches	in
m	meters	3.3	feet	ft
km	kilometers	1.1	yards	yd
		0.6	miles	mi

AREA

cm ²	square centimeters	0.16	square inches	in ²
m ²	square meters	1.2	square yards	yd ²
km ²	square kilometers	0.4	square miles	mi ²
ha	hectares (10,000 m ²)	2.5	acres	

MASS (weight)

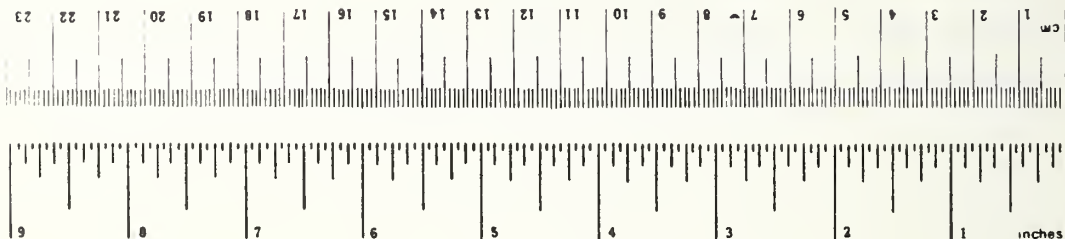
g	grams	0.035	ounces	oz
kg	kilograms	2.2	pounds	lb
t	tonnes (1000 kg)	1.1	short tons	

VOLUME

ml	milliliters	0.03	fluid ounces	fl oz
l	liters	2.1	pints	pt
l	liters	1.06	quarts	qt
l	liters	0.26	gallons	gal
m ³	cubic meters	35	cubic feet	ft ³
m ³	cubic meters	1.3	cubic yards	yd ³

TEMPERATURE (exact)

°C	Celsius temperature	9/5 (then add 32)	Fahrenheit temperature	°F
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* 1 in = 2.54 (exactly). For other exact conversions and more detailed tables, see NBS Misc. Publ. 286, Units of Weights and Measures, Price \$2.25, SD Catalog No. C13 10 286.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

There currently exist thousands of specialized transportation services for the elderly and handicapped (E&H) throughout the U.S.; most counties in the country are served by at least one such service, and many areas are served by several. Door-to-door services targeted to the E&H are provided by social service agencies, local governments, transit agencies, and private operators (both for profit and non-profit). Furthermore, taxi service is generally available for those persons ineligible for specialized services.

All such services meet the basic need of most E&H persons to get from one place to another. However, in many cases, E&H individuals need a greater level of assistance than is traditionally offered by specialized transportation providers; these people may need escorts to help them get in and out of their homes and destinations, as well as to help them perform certain functions they may have trouble doing on their own (e.g., food shopping). Some of the E&H use friends or relatives as escorts, but many others cannot provide their own travel companions.

Unfortunately, providing a highly personalized escort service for users would tend to lower the cost-effectiveness of a service, as productivity (i.e., passengers per vehicle-hour) would tend to be minimized; obviously, the time a driver/escort spends assisting passengers in the performance of activities or sitting with them in doctors' offices cannot be spent transporting other passengers. Since minimizing operating costs is a major concern of transportation operators, few can afford the luxury of providing such personalized service. In fact, on the contrary, rising operating costs, coupled with cutbacks in Federal and state funding programs, are forcing specialized transportation providers and sponsors to seek more efficient ways of providing service.

In many areas, greater efficiency - and, hence, lower unit costs - is being pursued through various forms of service coordination. However, coordi-

nation is not always feasible for particular providers and, moreover, has not always produced the desired improvements or cost savings. Hence, lower-cost community-based or cooperative forms of service, making effective use of resources available within the community, may prove to be important service alternatives over the coming years. Specifically, the use of volunteer labor* and private autos could enable an agency or community to provide service at significantly lower costs than is possible with professional drivers and vans or mini-buses.

Furthermore, in addition to forcing greater efficiency in service operations, the reduced availability of Federal and state funding will necessitate the recovery of greater percentages of operating costs through user charges and local (public and private) contributions. High fares will pose a problem to many of the E&H, and such an approach will not be feasible in many areas; however, in communities where the transportation handicapped (or sponsoring agencies - or institutions) can afford it, services priced so as to recover the bulk of operating costs may well become the only realistic option for the continued provision of specialized services.

One approach to the development and provision of low-cost community-based service is through a club-type structure, in which services are provided only to dues-paying members. Such an arrangement offers the benefit of developing and providing service based on the particular needs/desires of the service's users, and also provides a framework in which costs can be reduced through the volunteer efforts of members (i.e., through driving or answering the telephone in the central office).

The development of "grass roots" community-based services has been quite limited to-date,** and examples of both the use of the club arrangement and the

* "Volunteer" drivers are typically paid a nominal wage and/or reimbursed for their costs, but they are generally not full-time employees of the agency or community they are serving.

** There have been a couple of non-profit community-based services in operation in suburban neighborhoods in Baltimore - the NECO (Northeast Community Organization) Minibus and the 60 Plus Minibus - and one in Boston - the Mission Link; however, the latter two are fixed route service.

provision of escort service are few and far between.* There are a number of reasons for the dearth of community-based services; these may include the absence of a strong local initiator/manager (and the technical capabilities necessary to design and operate the service), the lack of start-up funds, the lack of an appropriate institutional setting, and opposition from existing transportation providers (i.e., taxi operators or a transit union). These are not addressed in depth in this report, but suffice it to say that any of them can serve to doom to failure any attempt to develop and introduce a grass roots service (i.e., through non-traditional institutional approaches).

1.2 THE POINT-TO-POINT CLUB

There is, however, at least one service in existence that basically fits the model described above. The Point-to-Point Club, based in Ardmore, Pennsylvania (a Philadelphia suburb), provides a highly personalized driver/escort service to its members - anyone living in the service area who is over 50 years of age or physically or mentally handicapped is eligible to join. The Club makes use of part-time driver/escorts, who are paid \$3.40 per hour (plus \$0.20 per mile) and use their own autos. Operating and administrative costs are covered by fares (\$8.00 per hour), membership fees (\$10.00 per year), donations, and service contracts. In addition, administrative support is provided by the Club's parent organization - Resources for Human Development (RHD), a diversified non-profit organization;** no direct Federal or state funds are used. Although the Club's usage is rather limited to date, the institutional/operational framework is rather unique and bears examination. This report presents a preliminary assessment of the Point-to-Point Club; the following sections discuss the site characteristics of the service area, the

* The "club" structure - a form of transportation cooperative - has generally been restricted to commuter ridesharing arrangements; examples include the Reston (VA) Commuter Bus and the Columbia (MD) Commuter Bus Corporation. Finally, an example of the provision of escort service is found in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where escorts are provided for those persons using the Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority's Lift Program.

** RHD is described in Section 4 of this report.

history of the Club, the current institutional/operational structure, the nature of demand for the service, and conclusions regarding transferability of the Club's operational approach.

2. SITE CHARACTERISTICS

2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The Point-to-Point Club provides service in four counties: Montgomery, Delaware, Chester, and Philadelphia (see Figure 1).^{*} This section describes some of the basic demographic information on each of the counties; this is followed by a summary of other transportation services in existence within the counties.

The basic population figures for the four counties are shown in Table 1.^{**} As shown, the area is heavily urbanized - in Philadelphia, Delaware and Montgomery Counties, over 80% of the populations live in urban areas; Chester County's percentage is much lower (45%), but its population is much smaller as well. In terms of elderly population, the percentage of persons over 65 is quite consistent among the four counties (8-12%) and is roughly equivalent to the national level (10%).

Perhaps the most noteworthy demographic data on the Point-to-Point Club's service area are related to family income. As of 1970, the mean and median family income figures (see Table 2) for the three suburban counties (Montgomery, Delaware, Chester) were considerably higher than the mean and median figures for the U.S. as a whole; the figures for Philadelphia, on the other

^{*} As of this writing, the Club had submitted a proposal to serve Bucks County as well. This service would involve the Club providing escorts, but not transportation, to accompany elderly (i.e., 65 or over) residents of Bucks County, which adjoins Montgomery County. The escort would provide his/her own transportation to the traveler's origin point; both traveler and escort would then be transported by taxi, and the escort would stay with the person he/she is accompanying at the point of destination. Another taxi would then transport them back to the point of origin. This project would be funded through Section 406 of the State's "Act 101" funding program. Under the terms of the proposed agreement, the Club would be reimbursed a flat fee of \$16 for each escort provided.

^{**} The data in this section are from the 1970 Census; 1980 figures on the items included here were not available from the county or regional planning agencies as of this writing.

Figure 1:
POINT-TO-POINT CLUB SERVICE AREA



Table 1

SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA*

ITEM	MONTGOMERY CO.	DELAWARE CO.	CHESTER CO.	PHILADELPHIA CO.	U.S.
Total population	623,799	603,456	278,311	1,948,609	201,790,450
Density (persons per sq. mi.)	1258	3261	366	15106	58
Urban pop.	508,743 (82%)	580,678 (97%)	124,934 (45%)	1,948,609 (100%)	149,324,930 (74%)
Rural pop.	115,056 (18%)	22,778 (3%)	153,377 (55%)	0 (0%)	52,465,520 (26%)
Pop. 65 or over	61,119 (10%)	59,039 (10%)	21,620 (8%)	228,000 (12%)	20,066,000 (10%)

*Source: Chester County Planning Commission, Chester County Population Analysis Census 1970

hand, are slightly lower than the national figures. Thus, this is a rather affluent area, which is certainly a contributing factor to the ability of the Point-to-Point Club to survive on a largely self-sustaining basis.

Finally, in terms of auto ownership, Table 2 shows that a high percentage of households (occupied housing units) in the suburban counties (nearly 50% in Chester and Montgomery and nearly 40% in Delaware) own two or more autos, while the percentage of autoless households in these counties (approximately 9% in Montgomery and Chester, 14% in Delaware) are quite low (the figure for the entire state of Pennsylvania is 20%).

2.2 OTHER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

While the Point-to-Point Club is rather unique within its service area in providing escort service, the area contains a considerable number of services available to the elderly and/or handicapped. The services currently offered within each of the counties are discussed below.

Table 2

SUMMARY OF INCOME AND AUTO OWNERSHIP DATA*

ITEM	MONTGOMERY CO.	DELAWARE CO.	CHESTER CO.	PHILADELPHIA CO.	U.S.
Mean family income	\$15,748	\$13,421	\$13,837	\$10,431	\$10,999
Median family income	\$12,747	\$11,822	\$11,609	\$9,366	\$9,590
Occupied housing units with 2 or more autos	90,449 (48.0%)	68,132 (37.7%)	37,696 (48.4%)	94,700 (14.7%)	N/A
Occupied housing units with no autos	17,535 (9.3%)	25,071 (13.8%)	6,988 (8.9%)	254,898 (39.7%)	N/A

*Source: Chester County Planning Commission, Chester County Population Analysis Census 1970

2.2.1 Montgomery County*

In Montgomery County, where the Point-to-Point Club is based, the bulk of specialized transportation service is provided by a group of taxi companies which have joined together to form a non-profit corporation - the Montgomery County Paratransit Association (MCPA). The MCPA provides contract service - through its nine member carriers - to county human service agencies, and also provides service for the non-agency-affiliated elderly (through a special state funding program - "Act 101"). Some human service agencies (predominantly

* Sources of information: conversation with Charles Taft of Montgomery Co. Planning Commission; Susan Orkin, "Taxi Services Form County-wide Corporation," in Taxicab Management, March 1982; and Human Services Institute, Inc., Human Transportation Coordination Study, 1980.

non-County agencies such as United Way) continue to operate their own services, but all agencies are urged by the County to contract with MCPA.

In terms of public transit, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) operates 33 bus routes and 7 rail lines within or through Montgomery County; more than half of the County's population lives within SEPTA's service area. In addition, 3 private bus companies provide service within the County.

2.2.2 Delaware County*

Delaware County is served by many different providers - both public and private; as many as 84 human service agencies have been identified as having some role relating to transportation of the elderly and handicapped, and approximately 34 agencies are involved in direct service provision. In an effort to reduce overall operating costs, the County is in the process of consolidating a number of these agencies' operations within the Delaware County Transportation Consortium (DCTC). The DCTC is still in the development stages; hence, the final configuration is not yet known.

In terms of private for-profit operators, the County is served by approximately 18 taxi companies, 6 private ambulance companies, and 1 chair car carrier. As for public transit, approximately 75% of the County's population lives within the SEPTA service area.

2.2.3 Chester County**

Chester County, by far the most rural of the four counties, also has the fewest specialized and public transportation options of these counties. Although a precise count has not been made, county officials estimate that

* Source: Multisystems, Inc., Delaware County Project E&H Final Report, prepared for Delaware County Planning Department, January 1981; and conversations with Richard Collins of the Delaware Co. Planning Dept.

** Source: Conversation with Wayne Clapp, Chester Co. Planning Commission; and Chester County Planning Commission, Chester County Public Transportation Study, January 1982.

there are at least 26 human service agencies directly providing service, with an additional 10-20 having some role relating to specialized transportation.

Public transportation is available in the form of 2 SEPTA bus routes and 2 commuter rail lines, as well a limited county operated rural transportation service (operating 1 day a week). Service is also provided by 4 private bus companies. Finally, there are 7 taxi companies licensed to make pick-ups in the County, and approximately 7 ambulance companies.

2.2.4 Philadelphia County

Philadelphia is served by a great many specialized transportation operators; these include both social service agencies and private (non-profit and for-profit) providers. Extensive public transit service is provided by SEPTA. In an effort to improve the provision of specialized service within Philadelphia (and eventually in the surrounding suburban counties), SEPTA is sponsoring the development of a "brokerage" system, through which the services of various providers will be coordinated. The broker (Wheels, Inc.) will contract with local taxi and lift van operators, who will provide service to the handicapped (specifically, those unable to use conventional transit), as well as to (non-handicapped) clients of participating social service agencies.

3. HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

3.1 ORIGIN

The Point-to-Point Club was initiated in July 1980, when its founder (and current director) approached Resources for Human Development (RHD) with the basic concept of a driver/escort "club." The Club's founder felt that there was a definite gap in the transportation options available to the elderly in the Philadelphia area. Specifically, she felt that many of the elderly need escorts to perform certain of their daily activities; in addition, many persons may have to travel between counties, and the existing services generally provided intra-county service only. To help address these needs, RHD donated office space and assisted the Club's founder in setting up a small non-profit driver/escort service.

In an effort to determine (and solicit) interest in such a service, the Club's founder undertook a survey of residents of area nursing homes and apartment complexes housing large concentrations of elderly. This was followed by a second, more specific survey aimed at ascertaining the specific type of service the interested individuals needed and/or wanted. Based on the results of this survey, the Point-to-Point Club was established as an advance notice driver/escort service for the elderly. Twenty people initially joined the Club, and service began in October 1980; eight rides were provided that month. The original charge for service was \$6 per hour, with a minimum fare of \$3; the fares were prorated above \$3 in \$1.50 per 15-minute increments (i.e., \$4.50 for 45 minutes, \$7.50 for 75 minutes, etc.).

3.2 INITIAL OPERATION AND EXPANSION

For the first year of the Club's operation, the founder/director provided all of the service on her own; in addition to driving/escorting, she handled all the service reservations and did the basic bookkeeping and billing. During this year, the Club grew slowly in size and amount of service provided. In January 1981, membership was opened to the handicapped (physically or mentally)

of all ages; this expansion followed the receipt of "a large number of requests" from the handicapped community.

The next milestone occurred in the summer of 1981, when the Club secured a contract with the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit to transport 5 (later 6) severely emotionally disturbed children to and from school. A contract rate of \$8 per hour (with an \$8 minimum charge) was established for this contract, and this became the regular rate for all Club service.* This contract greatly increased the demand for service, as these children accounted for nearly 200 rides per month. Additional driver/escorts, as well as an office coordinator, were hired to accommodate this new demand. The Club had also received its first "corporate" vehicle around this time, as Bell Telephone donated a used automobile (Bell also subsidized the production of brochures advertising the Club).**

The next big boost to membership and usage came in the fall (1981), when a response to a letter in a Philadelphia newspaper's Action Line made reference to the Club. Nearly 200 people called the Club at that time inquiring about service possibilities. Membership expanded fairly steadily beginning at that time, growing to the current total of 280. A number of these members joined through "contracts" or informal agreements with a number of agencies to transport their clients (see Sec. 4). The Club continues to seek new contracts and individual clients, and it also solicits donations from various sources.

3.3 OPPOSITION FROM TAXI COMPANIES

Besides normal developmental and administrative problems associated with implementing a new program, the major obstacle which has faced the Point-to-Point Club to date has been opposition from the area's taxi operators. A

* The terms of this contract have since been revised (see Section 4).

** Knowing that Bell frequently replaced vehicles in its fleet, the Point-to-Point Club's director approached Bell about the possibility of donating one to the Club. It turned out that Bell had donated other vehicles to various groups and agencies, and hence was willing to do the same for the Club.

number of local operators charged that the Club should not be able to operate without a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) - granted by the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC) - since it was charging a fee and operating essentially like a taxi company. The Club felt that it should be exempt from regulation by the PUC, in that it is a non-profit entity and serves only its members. Nevertheless, the Club submitted an application for a CPCN. Prior to any PUC ruling, however, the taxi companies' attorney conceded that, as a cooperative, the Point-to-Point Club indeed did not fall within the PUC's regulatory jurisdiction; hence, the application was withdrawn and the taxi companies' opposition was basically silenced.*

* The Club may actually be working with taxi operators (in Bucks County) in the near future, as explained earlier.

4. CURRENT INSTITUTIONAL/OPERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

4.1 INSTITUTIONAL SETTING: RESOURCES FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Point-to-Point Club is a division of Resources for Human Development (RHD), a non-profit organization based in Ardmore, PA. The Club has its own staff and office, but receives administrative support from RHD; RHD takes care of employee payroll and certain other administrative functions, and provides the Club's office supplies.

RHD itself is a diversified organization, currently made up of some 70 different program units. RHD provides resources, technical assistance, and accounting services for these individual programs; most of the programs are based in (and focus on) Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties, but some are statewide, regional, or even national in focus. RHD was started in 1970 with a \$50,000 grant from Montgomery County to provide counseling services within the county. RHD works with governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and individuals in establishing and operating research, consulting, training, and counseling activities, as well as residential opportunities, for senior citizens, the mentally and physically handicapped, very young children, and minority youth. The individual programs are funded through foundation grants, government contracts, fees, and/or donations. To cover fiscal/administrative activities (e.g., distribution of paychecks and program development), RHD allocates approximately 15% of a program's expenses to administrative overhead.

4.2 OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Point-to-Point Club is actually a type of cooperative, in that service is available only to Club members, who pay an annual fee of \$10 in addition to charges for individual trips. The Club is supported by the annual fees, user fares, contracts with local organizations/agencies, and donations from individuals, private corporations, and community organizations. Of the anticipated revenues for 1982, service fees are expected to comprise on the

order of 73%, membership fees 5%, and private donations the remainder. The operating budget is currently running on the order of \$4,000 per month.*

The Club currently has two full-time employees - the director and a coordinator/scheduler. They handle all call-taking, scheduling, and client billing, and also serve as driver/escorts on occasion. The regular driver/escorts are part-time employees, paid \$3.40 per hour of service provided plus \$0.20 per mile. As of this writing there were 12 driver/escorts; there is an on-going "core" of 8, while there has been a fairly high turnover of others. This turnover is largely attributable to the often low number of hours requested of each of these driver/escorts (i.e., because of the rather modest demand for the service, most requests are assigned to the core group). The driver/escorts transport clients in their own automobiles,** and are required to have four-door vehicles, so as to facilitate passenger entry and egress. The driver/escorts tend to be college students or retired persons, although some housewives have also participated; driver/escorts are selected through a careful interview process and those hired are given special instructions in dealing with the elderly and persons having different types of handicaps.

Driver/escorts are assigned to transport clients on the basis of relative proximity - i.e., the driver living closest to the client to be escorted is typically assigned to that client. To the extent possible, each client is always assigned the same driver/escort, so as to build up an ongoing relationship between the two; a number of regular users of the service have become quite attached to their drivers, and, in several instances clients have called drivers directly, rather than calling the Point-to-Point office. This practice is discouraged, but certain clients tend to continue to do it anyway. Because of the turnover cited above, it is not always possible to assign the

* These figures were provided by the Point-to-Point Club; a specific cost breakdown was not available.

** In terms of insurance, the Club makes sure that each driver/escort is carrying his/her own normal liability coverage, while RHD maintains secondary coverage on all passengers. The Club would like to obtain some form of group coverage for its drivers, but has made only preliminary inquiries toward this end.

same driver/escort to a client, but the existence of a core group of driver/escorts allows such an arrangement for most of the regular users.

The relationship between driver/escort and client is considered very important, since the Club's service is based largely on a philosophy of highly individualized service and assistance. Not only do the driver/escorts transport users to and from their destinations, they also stay with the users during their appointments (e.g., doctor's visit), or assist with other activities; examples include accompanying a blind/deaf client to utility company offices to make sure that he gets his questions regarding his bills answered, or assisting blind clients with their grocery shopping. In some cases, clients are simply taken to an appointment (i.e., for certain types of medical visits) and then picked up later, but the majority of trips involve the driver/escort staying with the client. Finally, in an effort to promote a sense of the Club as a total assistance resource, the director also maintains a "library" listing community resources in each county for Club members' information.

The Club's transportation service is available to any member on 3-day advance notice, although, if the schedule permits, shorter notice is accepted; this long advance notice is necessary because the Club's drivers are employed on a part-time basis and thus require sufficient advance notice to arrange their driving assignments within their overall schedules. Service is provided within an area consisting of Montgomery, Delaware, Chester, and Philadelphia Counties. Service is available 7 days per week and essentially any time of day; the recommended call-in time for service requests is 9-5, but a telephone answering machine permits requests at other times as well. Clients are requested to cancel reservations which cannot be kept at least 1 day in advance of the scheduled trip, and failure to do this results in the client being billed the minimum service charge (\$8).

As mentioned earlier, the charge for service is \$8 per hour (from the time the driver arrives at the client's home to the time the client is dropped off - either back at his/her home or at the appointment); if a person is dropped off and then picked up later, he/she is charged for two separate trips. In addition to the base fare, there is a \$0.20 per mile "deadhead" charge covering the distance between the driver/escort's home and the client's home. When more

than one person is transported at the same time, the total fare is the base charge (i.e., for a single passenger) plus \$2 for each additional rider; thus, two or more riders generally split the total charge among themselves. Each user is billed on a monthly basis, except where outside agencies subsidize the trips; in such cases, the agencies are billed for trips made by their clients.

The Point-to-Point Club has a variety of service agreements (unwritten) with area organizations. The only formal contract to provide service has been that with the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit, mentioned earlier;* the terms of that contract call for the Club to transport 6 learning disabled pre-school children from their homes to and from an elementary school each day for a total fee of approximately \$100 per day.

The Club has entered into less formal agreements with the following organizations/agencies:

1. Multiple Sclerosis Society
2. Philadelphia Office on the Visually Handicapped
3. Philadelphia College of Optometry
4. Abingdon School District
5. Martin's Run (residential care facility)
6. Main Line Nursing Home
7. Nevil Association for the Blind
8. City of Philadelphia Nursing Home
9. Jewish "Y" of Philadelphia
10. Golden Slippers (a charity organization)
11. 58th and Greenway (a nursing home)

In addition to these agreements, the Club has enlisted members and provided trips through referrals from several agencies, including local rehabilitation centers and two specialized transportation providers (Wheels, Inc. of Philadelphia and COSA** of Delaware Co.); COSA refers clients to the Club when they

*This contract does not cover the summer months.

**County Office of Service for the Aging.

need to be transported outside of Delaware County. Finally, the Club occasionally provides special one-time service for groups; an example of this is a recent agreement with a high school to transport a group of disabled seniors to their graduation. In such instances, the Club arranges for the necessary number of drivers and vehicles to handle the particular level of demand.

4.3 DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS

As mentioned earlier, the Point-to-Point Club currently (July 1982) has 280 members, approximately 50% of whom are blind. However, only about 30% of the members use the service on a regular (i.e., monthly) basis, others use it once or twice a year (e.g., to get to and from the airport). Usage of the service has been on the order of 400 rides per month (with a peak of 420 in November 1981), although starting in June 1982 the total dropped to the 150-200 range. This change is primarily attributable to the fact that the Montgomery Co. Intermediate Unit contract does not cover the summer months; The 6 students transported accounted for approximately half the Club's ridership. However, in addition, ridership has dropped somewhat due to the fact that the Club has started turning down some requests that are essentially "taxi-type" trips (i.e., where no escort is actually needed); the Club has been trying to discourage people from using its service solely because it is cheaper than using taxi service, although it is often difficult to determine what constitutes a taxi-type trip.

In terms of types of trips served by the Club, no actual breakdown is available. In general, though, the bulk of the Club's service involves taking people into Philadelphia from one of the other counties or from one county to another - primarily because many of the other specialized carriers (i.e., county agency providers) cannot cross county lines. Most of the longer Club trips are for medical purposes: to hospitals, health care centers, and private offices for radiation treatments, chemotherapy, dialysis, physical therapy, eye treatments, dental care, prosthetic work, psychiatric treatment, and cardiac treatment. Many of the shorter - generally intra-county - trips are for shopping, although other local trips purposes include educational and

rehabilitation programs, job interviewing, attendance at meetings and conferences, paying (and straightening out) bills, and social, recreational, and cultural events.

Although no figures were available, the Club's director reported that very few trips have involved ridesharing. The Club is just beginning to promote sharing of rides - the director has, on occasion, made efforts to have certain individuals' appointments shifted so as to accommodate the escorting of more than one person at a time; this has proven feasible in several instances. However, the very focus of the Club's service - highly personalized assistance - essentially militates against extensive ridesharing. Unlike most transportation services, achievement of high productivities is simply not a major objective of the Club. Finally, since many of the Club's users are confined to wheelchairs, the size of the vehicles used (sedans) limits the number of passengers and aids that can be transported simultaneously.

4.4 FUTURE NEEDS AND PLANS

The Point-to-Pont Club has now (July 1982) been operating for slightly over a year and a half. At this point, the Club's director has made several decisions regarding its future direction. These are discussed below.

First, the director would like to increase the Club's membership and service - with both individuals and institutional members. Apparently, a number of agencies within the region have expressed interest in making use of the Club.* Improving its public relations is obviously the first step toward attracting new members, and the Club is thus seeking greater public exposure. To facilitate expansion, the Club is considering several service and fiscal

* One possible means of expanding social service agency involvement would be to institute some sort of user-side subsidy program in which trip coupons would be sold to agencies, which in turn would issue coupons (for free or at a discount) to their clients. These clients could then use coupons to pay for Point-to-Point Club service (or perhaps other services as well). Finally, the drivers would turn the coupons in to the Club office to document the amount of service they have provided.

adjustments. First, in order to generate greater revenue from each trip, the director is considering instituting a distance-based (as opposed to timebased) fare for the travel portion of the driver/escort service (the time spent waiting with or assisting the user would still involve a time-based charge).

The second change being considered is a "decentralization" of the service request and provision process. The director would eventually like to establish remote offices serving specific communities within the overall service area; driver/escorts would be assigned to the nearest office, and residents of each community would contact the nearest office for a ride. Such an arrangement would promote the "community" orientation of the Club and would save money (for both the user and the Club) on deadheading. The third change, which has already begun - as discussed above - is to promote ridesharing wherever possible.

The Club's director would also like to bring the Club "closer to the people and groups it is serving" by encouraging the participation of members in making and/or approving policy decisions. This would involve instituting a Board of Users to represent the interests of the members. This would bring the Club closer to a true cooperative in structure - a rather unique approach to meeting transportation needs.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

The Point-to-Point Club, a division of a non-profit human services agency (Resources for Human Development), provides door-through-door escort service to elderly and handicapped individuals within a four-county area in the Philadelphia region. Using part-time driver/escorts (who use their own autos) the Club serves members only for a fare of \$8 per hour (plus \$0.20 per mile for deadheading time). The 280 members each pay a \$10 annual membership fee. Approximately 30% of the membership uses the service regularly, although (until June 1982) 6 members accounted for nearly half of the roughly 400 rides per month.* At a monthly cost of approximately \$4,000, the Club's service has been operating at a cost of roughly \$10 per trip. The costs not recovered through fares are covered by a combination of membership fees and private donations.

The Point-to-Point Club has been in operation since October 1980. It started quite slowly, with the founder (the current director) serving virtually all administrative and operational functions for the first year. Membership - and usage - expanded considerably between September and November 1981, with moderate growth since then. The major obstacle facing the Club's development involved questions over the need for PUC certification. This issue, triggered by opposition from the local taxi industry, was finally settled when the taxi companies agreed that the Point-to-Point Club service does not fall within PUC certification classifications, and therefore does not have to be certified.

The major pressure currently facing the Club is meeting its costs in a self-supporting manner; if the Club is to avoid raising the charge for service, it must continue to seek private donations and improve the efficiency of its service (i.e., through decreasing deadheading mileage and/or increasing ridesharing).

*No monthly totals were available at the time of this assessment.

5.2 KEY FINDINGS AND TRANSFERABILITY

Although rather modest in scale, the Point-to-Point Club presents an important - and fairly unique - model for the provision of specialized transportation services. The Club has incorporated several unusual approaches, each of which may be appropriate for other settings. Key findings concerning the Club's most salient features are as follows:

1. highly personalized escort service - Whereas specialized transportation services typically consist of door-to-door (or occasionally door-through-door) transportation, the Point-to-Point Club provides a significantly higher level of assistance. While such assistance should be viewed as a premium service, many people need this level of assistance to carry out certain basic activities. Publicly-sponsored agencies and organizations cannot be expected to subsidize escort service for every eligible user, but, where users can afford to pay the full (or nearly full) cost of providing the service, it is certainly a reasonable option for privately-operated services. Thus, a service such as the Point-to-Point Club could prove feasible (on a largely self-supporting basis) in any relatively affluent area.

2. use of part-time labor and private vehicles - As opposed to using full-time or "professional" drivers and larger vehicles (i.e., vans or mini-buses), the Point-to-Point Club keeps operating costs down by employing nonprofessional drivers (e.g., college students, retired persons, house spouses, etc.) on an as-needed basis. These people are essentially volunteers, since they are paid minimal wages and are not guaranteed a minimum level of work. In addition, they use their own automobiles and are responsible for their own insurance and maintenance. The nature of the service does not require transporting more than a couple of passengers at a time; hence, sedans are sufficient for virtually all trips.*

3. self-supporting service - As public funds available for specialized transportation become increasingly scarce, the ability of such services to

* The Point-to-Point Club does carry a number of wheelchair users; these persons require special assistance, but are transported in sedans.

become self-sustaining (through fares and private donations) could become crucial to their survival. The Point-to-Point Club's experience has demonstrated that - at least in fairly affluent areas - there are elderly and handicapped individuals and institutions willing to pay high (compared to public services) fares for a high level of service.*

4. cooperative structure - The cooperative, or "club," structure, in which service is provided to members only, permits development of a service tailored to the particular needs and desires of the users, and also promotes a sense of "community" among members. Furthermore, the club arrangement can preclude the need for PUC certification.

5. "community" transportation basis - Although many of the Point-to-Point Club trips cross county lines, the Club takes a community-based approach in arranging rides, in that driver/escorts are generally assigned based on proximity to individual users. This tends to reduce deadheading mileage and thus decreases both operator and user costs.

One or more of the above approaches can certainly prove feasible in other locations. However, the key to successful implementation and operation of any type of grass roots or community-based transportation service lies in the existence of a strong project initiator (and manager) and an appropriate institutional setting. The Point-to-Point Club would never have been started without the diligent efforts of its founder/director; she identified a particular gap in the specialized transportation environment and developed an operational approach to meet a rather specific type of need. However, the project might not have come to fruition without the assistance of Resources for Human Development. RHD offered a setting in which the Point-to-Point Club could be developed, providing office space, supplies, administrative expertise, and initial funding. Then, by maintaining its administrative/technical assistance, RHD enabled the Point-to-Point Club to operate with a minimal staff and

** Of course, though high, the Club's fares are somewhat lower than taxi fares for comparable trips.

to overcome the various problems associated with operating a new (and untested) program.*

Thus, the transferability of the Point-to-Point Club model is largely dependent on the existence of an organization capable of - and interested in - offering an institutional framework in which a project can be developed. This should ideally be a local organization, but it should be kept in mind that a multi-faceted organization such as RHD often administers programs outside of its own area. Therefore, a local initiator outside the Philadelphia area could conceivably start a Point-to-Point type service with assistance from RHD or some similar diversified organization.

* For instance, RHD's attorney assisted in settling the PUC certification issue.

APPENDIX

REPORT OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

The work performed under this contract, while not leading to any significant inventions, discoveries, or innovations, has made use of state-of-the-art methodologies to complete an analysis of findings available on the implementation and operation of the project. These findings will be useful to other communities throughout the United States in the planning and design of improved transportation services.

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